



OFFICE OF RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Marc Elrich
County Executive

Tiffany Ward
Director and Chief Equity Officer

MEMORANDUM

May 4, 2023

To: Jennifer Bryant, Director
Office of Management and Budget

From: Tiffany Ward, Director
Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice 

Re: Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) Supplemental Appropriation (SA) #23-86
FY23 Operating Budget American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary Schools
Emergency Relief Fund – Homeless Children and Youth Grant

- I. **FINDING:** The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) finds that Supplemental Appropriation #23-86 *FY23 Operating Budget American Rescue Plan (ARP) Elementary and Secondary Schools Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund – Homeless Children and Youth (HCY) Grant* has the potential to advance equity for Montgomery County Public School (MCPS) students experiencing homelessness, however, the absence of demographic data makes it difficult to determine to what extent this supplemental will also advance racial equity. Nationally, low-income children and youth who are Black, Native/Indigenous, Latino, LGBTQ+, unaccompanied minors¹, pregnant and parenting, or foster youth experience homelessness at disproportionately high rates². Given these statistics, children and youth who identify as Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC), as well as those who are undocumented in Montgomery County, will ultimately benefit from grants such as ARP ESSER-HCY. In order to ensure that grant funds mitigate racial disparities amongst MCPS students experiencing homelessness, the implementation of culturally responsive programming and outreach efforts must be linked to data and evaluation efforts that demonstrate positive outcomes for these children.

¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Fact Sheet: Unaccompanied Children (UC) Program*. 2023. Available at: <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/uac-program-fact-sheet.pdf>

² Covenant House. *Youth Homelessness*. 2023. Available at: <https://www.covenanthouse.org/homeless-issues/youth-homelessness-statistics>

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- II. **BACKGROUND:** The primary purpose of Supplemental Appropriation #23-86 *FY23 Operating Budget ARP ESSER Fund - HCY Grant* is to provide funding in the amount of \$1,065,736 to MCPS in their continued efforts to support unhoused students and their families. Specifically, the grant will be used to fund salaries and benefits for MCPS staff and contractors working with homeless children and youth in addition to other supports that meet the unique needs of these students, reconnecting them to school and its support systems post-pandemic. These additional supports include increasing the availability of reliable transportation and access to technology in addition to MCPS' outreach to families, shelters, and community organizations serving homeless students and/or families.

Unstable housed children and families living in Montgomery County are referred to the Homeless Unit within the International Admissions and Enrollment office³ throughout the course of the school year. There, MCPS works to minimize the effects of mobility on homeless students by maintaining a stable educational environment enrolling children in a school that suits their best interests while also providing prompt and sensitive service to parents and children in need of assistance.⁴ Supplemental information accompanying the funding request states that ARP ESSER-HCY grant funds will be used to support these efforts in the following ways:

- Many unhoused students experience frequent disruptions in their housing, being forced to move on short notice. MCPS staff will continue to work collaboratively to keep students' schools stable, with grant funds providing for transportation getting children to and from their new address and school of origin.
- Providing school supplies such as notebooks and calculators, test prep books for high school students, and books and math manipulatives for elementary students.
- The purchase of laptop computers and charging carts/stations for community shelters to ensure access to technology for unhoused students and their caregivers to facilitate school engagement and academic success.
- The continued collaboration of MCPS staff during bi-weekly School Well-Being Team meetings to ensure that the needs of unhoused students and families are regularly discussed and that they are regularly engaged and supported.

ORESJ has previously documented inequities in educational opportunity and resources impacting the experiences of BIPOC students, particularly those that are low-income, in Montgomery County in the following Racial Equity Impact Assessments (REIAs):

³ Montgomery County Public Schools. *Welcome to International Admissions and Enrollment (IAE)*. 2021. Available at: <https://www2.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/student-services/schooling/iae>

⁴ Montgomery County Public Schools. *Homeless Children*. 2023. Available at: <https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/info/enroll/homeless.aspx>

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1. REIA of Supplemental Appropriation #22-24 High-Quality Early Childhood Inclusion
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/22-24.pdf>
2. REIA of Supplemental Appropriation #22-75 ARPA IDEA Early Intervention Grant
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/22-75.pdf>
3. REIA of Supplemental Appropriation #22-77 ARPA IDEA Part B1 Grant and SA#22-78 ARPA IDEA Part B2 Grant
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/22-77and22-78.pdf>
4. REIA of Supplemental Appropriation #22-93 MCPS Title I, Part A Grant
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/22-93.pdf>
5. REIA of Supplemental Appropriation #23-05 MCPS Major Capital Projects – Secondary (P652102)
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/23-05.pdf>
6. REIA of Supplemental Appropriation #23-25 MCPS SAC Fund
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/23-25.pdf>

III. **ANALYSIS:** Utilizing the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act definition of homelessness (the lack of a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence)⁵, MCPS finds that there are currently 1,226 students enrolled with homeless status, having provided the following breakdown:

- 352 unhoused elementary school students
- 183 unhoused middle school students
- 322 unhoused high school students
- 129 students enrolled as unaccompanied youth
- 92 students currently living in homeless shelters
- 148 students currently living in hotels/motels

Compared to their stably housed peers, unhoused students and families experience greater negative risk factors that impede their academic success. Supplemental information accompanying this funding request stated that within MCPS specifically, there exists a sizeable achievement gap between unhoused and stably housed students resulting in barriers to academic success. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these vulnerabilities, with unhoused students being increasingly under-identified, resulting in them being underserved by schools and districts.

⁵ National Center for Homeless Education. *Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness: An Introduction to the Issues*. 2017. Available at: <https://nche.ed.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/introduction.pdf>

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The REIAs referenced above provide readers with context regarding inequities in educational opportunities for MCPS children and families, particularly those who are BIPOC and/or low-income. Specifically, they connect food insecurity, health outcomes (both physical and cognitive), and historical and systemic factors to well-being outcomes and achievement gaps. Supplemental Appropriation #23-86 aims to meet the needs of unhoused children and youth in MCPS schools through the provision of salaries and employee benefits for those working with these students in addition to other supports that aim to mitigate achievement gaps through the use of ARP ESSER-HCY grant funds. This funding provides educational agencies with opportunities to identify homeless children and youth, provide them with wraparound services to address the challenges of COVID-19 and provide assistance to enable homeless children and youth to attend school and fully participate in school activities.⁶ To maximize these resources' impacts on meeting the needs of unhoused BIPOC MCPS student and their families, ORESJ recommends reviewers consider the following:⁷

1. Among MCPS staff working with unhoused students, prioritize assessment and service delivery decisions that are responsive to the diversity and fluidity of circumstances among these children and families—incorporating authentic youth and family voice to ensure that their lived experiences contribute to strategies that seek to address their unique needs and aspirations.
2. Develop strategies to address the disproportionate risk unhoused BIPOC and undocumented students face through the collection and use of data to track whether these children and youth are served less frequently, or less effectively, than their White, stably housed peers. Informed by this continuous monitoring, MCPS can better tailor outreach, staff recruitment or development, and service delivery models to prevent a higher risk of homelessness among some groups and to provide safer, more inclusive services that meet their needs for exiting homelessness.
3. Collaborate across county agencies such as child welfare and juvenile justice (where BIPOC children are disproportionately represented) in addition to educational systems to implement prevention and early intervention strategies aimed at curbing homelessness amongst MCPS students.

cc: Dr. Monifa McKnight, Superintendent, Montgomery County Public Schools
Ken Hartman, Director, Strategic Partnership, Office of the County Executive

⁶ Grants Office. *ARP: ESSER Homeless Children and Youth (HCY)*. 2023. Available at:
<https://www.grantsoffice.com/GrantDetails.aspx?gid=59750>

⁷ Morton, M., Dworsky, A., & Samuels, G. *Missed Opportunities: Youth Homelessness in America - National Estimates*. 2017. Available at: <https://voicesofyouthcount.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/VoYC-National-Estimates-Brief-Chapin-Hall-2017.pdf>